PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB INC.
www.peninsulafieldnaturalists.org.au

NEWSLETTER: December 2024

Adams Creek NCR excursion, September 14, 2024

This was our third visit to this location, having previously visited in March and November 2021 (reported in the newsletters of June and December of that year). On this visit we explored a different part of the Reserve, and saw some different things. The day started unpromisingly with a heavy rainshower soon after we set off; however the weather soon cleared and only a few light showers followed for the rest of the day.

The bulk of the Reserve comprises an open woodland of the same Eucalypts as found on the Peninsula: *E. obliqua, E. ovata, E. radiata* and *E. viminalis* ssp *pryoriana*. The understory contained some eye-catching flowers including Pink Bells (*Tetratheca ciliata*), Blue Dampiera (*D. stricta*), Common Heath (ranging from white to pale pink forms), Snowy Daisy-bush (*Olearia lirata*), Showy Bossiaea (*B. cinerea*), Wiry Bauera (*B. rubioides*), and Spike Beard-heath (*Leucopogon australis*). Two Hibbertias were in flower: *H. fasciculata* and *H. procumbens*, as were two Acacias, *A longifolia* and *A. suaveolens*. The Wedding Bush (*Ricinocarpus pinifolius*) was also flowering. A single *Aotus ericoides* was seen in flower.
Orchids noted were *Acianthus caudatus* (Mosquitoes), *Caladenia catenata* (White Fingers), *Chiloglottis valida* (Common Bird), *Glossodia major* (Waxlip), and three Greenhoods: *Pterostylis melagramma* (Tall), *P. nutans* (Nodding) and *P. pedunculata* (Maroonhood). Some *Thelymitra* species (Sun Orchids) were seen in bud.

Birds were relatively scarce, out final tally amounting to 24 for the day, including Shelduck and White-faced Heron on an adjoining property. Notable sightings were a large flock of a dozen or more Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, twenty or so Red-browed Finches, and, on a short walk along a narrow track after lunch, being suddenly surrounded by Yellow Robins, Spotted Pardalotes and White-throated Treecreepers.

I was intrigued by several large patches of lichen. Lichens are very hard to identify for the neophyte, but some research on one of my photos lead me (via iNaturalist and the Australasian Virtual Herbarium) to the species of fruticose lichens *Pulchrocladia retipora*. Besides the similarity in appearance, AVH has a record of this species collected (now in the National Herbarium of Victoria) in 2016 from Adams Creek NCR within a few hundred metres of the one in my photograph! This species was the first Australian lichen to be scientifically documented, being one of several species collected by Labillardiere in Tasmania in 1792 during d'Entrecasteaux's voyage in search of Laperouse, who arrived in Botany Bay just days after the First Fleet and subsequently disappeared in the South Pacific. A photo of another fruticose lichen led me only as far as the genus Cladonia, of the type known as reindeer lichens. A work in progress.
Text & Photos: Lee Denis

Left: Cladonia species
Right: Pulchrocladia retipora

Down the Murray River, source to mouth: geological history, geomorphology and a bit of botany

Leon Costermans presented this talk at our November 13, 2024 meeting
Leon has previously presented this talk on the Murray to the FNCV, and has inserted a question mark into the title after 'source'.
Leon pointed out that, for such a long river with multiple inflows from rivers along its length, to call one particular place the 'source' is rather misleading. The volumes of water contributing to the flow of the Murray from the Murrumbidgee, Lachlan, Edwards, Darling etc. could be called 'sources' too.
However historically, the source has been considered to be Indi Springs near the Cobberas peaks, in the Paleozoic felsic igneous rocks of the Australian Alps. The headwaters area is basement rock—sedimentary and igneous.
The Murray travels through 3 distinct geological regions in its journey from its nominal source to its mouth in South Australia.

The course of the Murray made for a convenient demarcation when Victoria became a separate colony from NSW in 1851. But there remained the issue of how to finish the border from the Murray's headwaters in the Alps to the coast. It was determined to use Cape Howe as the finish point, and 2 surveyors, named Black and Allan, were commissioned to survey and record a straight-line border. They started in 1870, one at each end, and met 2 years later with remarkable accuracy which, considering the difficult terrain and the technology of the time, was an astonishing achievement.
The middle section of the Murray starts near Corryong, where the river reaches the plain. An aerial photo of Towong shows a series of meandering loops, current and former courses, caused by flood events over the eons. This pattern of looping and many changes of course continues to Barmah, where the Goulburn joins the Murray. The tree vegetation in the North-east Slopes section is mainly Box/Ironbark/Cypress Pine woodland, with Kurrajong, Blakely's Red-gum and others.

About 70,000 years ago, elevation on the west side of the north–south Cadell Fault changed the course of the Murray, which had previously flowed westwards from the position of Mathoura. This previous course remains as a gentle valley called Green Gully. Black Box eucalypts, as found at Green Gully, are often an indicator of former river courses. The uplift dammed the Murray, and consequent periodic flooding created the conditions for the Barmah-Millewa Forest, with its River Red Gums. The Murray initially flowed northwards along the course of the present Edward River. Then about 9000 years ago, the river changed course again to follow its present course south to Echuca.
The Loddon River, near Kerang, marks the start of the third major section of the Murray. Eight million years ago, NW Victoria and neighbouring South Australia (the Mallee) to the north and west of the Grampians were under the sea. By five million years ago the sea had retreated to nearer its present shoreline. As the sea ebbed and fluctuated it created a strandplain with gently curved ridges across the region. At that stage the Murray probably reached the sea near the course of the present Glenelg River.

Two million years ago uplift blocked the river, creating a megalake called Lake Bungunnia. In the last million years with increased aridity and some tectonic tilting, Lake Bungunnia dried out and drained to the west, leaving the current course of the Murray in South Australia passing through limestone gorges overlain with Loxton Sand. Sedimentary ridges near the coast diverted the river to produce Lake Alexandrina and the mouth. With so much water soaking into the sand and extracted for human use there is very little left to run into the sea, and sometimes the Murray is blocked altogether by sand bars.

'Stories Beneath our Feet, exploring the geology and landscapes of Victoria and surrounds', by Leon Costermans and Fons VandenBerg, explains and illustrates this and other geological histories and formations in a very readable and illuminating book. The photos are all from the book.

Photos:
From top left: near Indi Springs, the 'source'
2/ The upper Murray River at Towong
3/ The gorge tract at Bowhill, east of Mannum
This page: the mouth of the Murray, with the Coorong at the top right, and Lake Alexandrina top left.
All photos taken from 'Stories Beneath our Feet', with permission from author

Vale: Fons VandenBerg

Leon's co-author of 'Stories Beneath our Feet', and friend, Fons VandenBerg sadly died a few days before Leon's talk to us.
Fons had a distinguished career as a geologist at the Geological Survey of Victoria, particularly working in mapping and the Paleozoic history of Victoria. He received several medals for this work.
He was a resident of Frankston, and long-term volunteer at Langwarrin Flora and Flora Reserve, where he tirelessly worked on woody weeds. He always brought a fruit cake to the monthly working bees to share with everyone.

Adams Creek continued

Bird List For Adams Creek NCR 14 September 2024			
Australian Shelduck	White-throated Treecreeper	White-naped Honeyeater	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike
White-faced Heron	Superb Fairy-wren	Eastern Spinebill	Grey Butcherbird
Australian Kestrel	Spotted Pardalote	Eastern Yellow Robin	Australian Magpie
Spotted Dove	Brown Thornbill	Rufous Whistler	Grey Currawong
Crimson Rosella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Grey Shrike-thrush	Little Raven
Laughing Kookaburra	White-eared Honeyeater	Grey Fantail	Red-browed Finch

Photo by Lee Denis: Tetratheca ciliata

Birding at Woods Reserve, October 7, 2024

With a cool, wet and windy forecast for the outing, only three members braved the conditions; some people were away, others were crook. The thick forest provided some shelter from the wind and infrequent showers.

A wide strip of vegetation in the scout camp has been cleared down to the creek, where all the lilies are; this area had previously been the main hangout for Bell Miners.

The highlights for the day were a flock of 20+ Red-browed Firetails, a Sacred Kingfisher and Dusky Woodswallows. Also delightful was the abundance of Waxlip Orchids, the most we'd seen here for years.

We no longer have access to the shelter in the scout camp, so we moved to Devil Bend for lunch and a welcome hot cuppa. The strong, cold wind off the reservoir dissuaded us from another walk after lunch.

Our total for the day was 37, a respectable number considering the conditions.

Text & photo (Waxlip orchid): Heather Ducat.

Baluk Willam NCR, Courtneys Rd South Belgrave October 19, 2024

Our last visit to Baluk Willam NCR was a quick visit in November 2018, on our way to Karwarra Gardens. We had a full day there in October 2017.

Five of us went from Frankston- Lee, William, Heather, Lyn and I, and we met our newest member Craig Woods, who lives nearby, there. Craig was a great addition to our group, being a good birder, and interested in everything. The weather was mild and overcast, but not warm enough to open up the sun orchids.

We had a great day there, with a feast of orchids- 16 species that we identified. We encountered some orchid experts there who verified some of our IDs, which helped. The highlight was a Potato Orchid, Gastrodia sesamoides, a species we don't often see. The cinnamon scent was a bonus.

We saw plenty of birds too, 32 species, the highlight being a great view of a Sacred Kingfisher.

There were lots of flowers: peas, billy buttons, blue stars, milkmaids, goodenia, and two that we don't see here- Butterfly flag iris (Diplarrena moraea) and Yellow Rice-flower (Pimelea flava). Unfortunately on the roadside we saw a new garden escapee- a very showy blue star iris from South Africa- Aristea ecklonii.

It is always a great day at Baluk Willam NCR in Spring, and the reserve is well maintained.

Acianthus caudatus - Mayfly	Caladenia carnea – pink fingers
Caladenia catenata – White fingers	Caladenia iridescens – Bronze caladenia
Caladenia pusilla – Tiny fingers	Caladenia tentaculata – Green comb spider
Chiloglottis valida – Common bird orchid	Gastrodia sesamoides – Potato orchid
Glossodia major - Waxlip	Lyperanthus suavolens – Brown beak
Microtis unifolia – Onion orchid	Pterostylis melagramma – Tall greenhood
Pterostylis nutans – Nodding greenhood	Thelymitra ixioides – Spotted Sun orchid
Thelymitra media	Thelymitra rubra – Salmon sun orchid

Text: Judy Smart

Photos: clockwise from top left– Sacred kingfisher (Lee Denis),
Calochilus paludosus—Red Beard-orchid (Lee Denis)
Pimelea flava (J Smart)
Fairy-wren (Lee Denis)
Lyperanthus suavolens—Brown beak (J Smart)
Gastrodia sesamoides—Potato orchid (J Smart)

SEANA Camp at Marysville, October 25-28
Lake Mountain

Three of us attended the Spring SEANA Camp at Marysville, hosted by Ringwood Field Naturalists Club over the last weekend of October.
As always, it was a terrific weekend, with great excursions, speakers, and the company of fellow naturalists.
My priority was the day visit to Lake Mountain, to see the recovery after the 2009 fires, the start of the wildflower season, and hopefully some Flame Robins.

We were very lucky to have leading us Sue Parry, who worked at Lake Mountain Resort as Environmental Officer from after the fires until she retired 2 years ago. Prior to that she was a Ski Patroller there. She is the author of 'Lake Mountain Field Guide'.
The snow gums are recovering well, and back to about half of their previous height. We were too early for the main wildflower display, and alpine plants such as daisies and trigger plants were only just in leaf. To make up for this though, the Alpine Phebalium, Leionema phylicifolium, a bright golden shrub, filled the foreground everywhere. The weather was cool and bright, and there were a few pockets of snow remaining in shady spots. We saw quite a number of birds, especially Currawongs and honeyeaters, but only one Flame Robin. I guess the rest were hiding.

Another interesting plant was Grevillea monslacana (named after Lake Mountain), which was split from Grevillea victoriae in 2000.
It is widely believed that Lake Mountain was named after a surveyor named Mr Lake. Sue said that she investigated, and that there was no such person! There is a small lake up there, so that must be the origin of the name.

Marysville township is looking beautiful. The gardens are lush, the forest trees much recovered, and the built facilities are sympathetically designed and built.
Text & most photos: J Smart
Top: Lake Mountain
Left: Alpine Phebalium
Below: Gallipoli Park Marysville (HD
Right: Waratah in Marysville

Cathedral Range

Eleanor & I enjoyed a full day excursion on Saturday to the Cathedral Ranges State Park, situated about 20kms. north of Marysville. Our 2C. crisp morning improved to a mild sunny day with no wind.

The narrow Cathedral Range runs north/south for about 11kms. and is composed of sandstone and mudstone, deposited by river systems in Early Devonian time -- 395 m.y.a. The formation was later uplifted and the strata is now vertical. The range is a popular rock-climbing location.
Steep walking tracks give access to the ridgeline and peaks of Mt. Sugarloaf and The Cathedral; fortunately
our morning walk was a flat easy stroll close to Little River and Storm Creek, through mostly Manna Gum
and Candlebark forest. The afternoon walk was through heathland and regrowth after logging up to about the 1940s. The route was close to the boundary of two geological formations ;- Cathedral Sediments and volcanic Rhyolite of the Cerberean Cauldron, to the east.
Our birdlist for the day was about 32, highlights included a Lyrebird on the road, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Olive-backed Oriol, Satin Bowerbird and Golden Whistler. A Tigersnake, Swamp Wallaby and a Deer were also observed.
The geology of the area is really interesting, my understanding was improved by reading Leon's very informative book exploring geology and landscapes of Victoria. The peaks and ridgeline of the Cathedral Range beckoned but my rock-scrambling days are well behind me.
Thank-you to Jack and Jennifer of the Ringwood Club for a well-researched and interesting excursion.

Before leaving on Monday morning Eleanor and I had a look at Steavenson Falls where we saw another snake, a 1m.+ Highlands Copperhead, only a few metres away on the main path: sure beats the morning cup of coffee to wake you up !!!!
Text & Photos: Heather Ducat
Top right: Cathedral Range
Lower left: Little River at Cathedral Ranges State Park
Lower right: Steavenson Falls

Birding at Coolart, November 4, 2024

Our day began with four juvenile King Parrots near the information centre, apparently feeding on the fruits of a Hop Bush. The Willie-wagtails were nesting in the woolshed as usual, a dead tree was thickly populated by Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. Water level was low in the lagoon; the Ibis were gone. Pacific Black Duck and Chestnut Teal, a grebe, Coots, Swamphens and some Cormorants were in evidence on the water, Black-fronted Dotterels and Masked Lapwings on the waters edge. Welcome Swallows were nesting in the hide; they kept a watch until all but one of the birdwatchers had left, then—when given a bit of space—one settled on its nest.

Most sightings were bush birds—mostly the usual including Fairy-wren, Yellow Robin, Grey Fantail, the ubiquitous Noisy Miner, Magpie, Little Raven, Grey Butcherbird. Sacred Kingfisher, Golden Whistler, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Shining Bronze-cuckoo were heard all day, but never sighted. It's always a highlight to see Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos fly across with their lazy wingbeats—how do they stay aloft when other birds seem to have to work so much harder? Red-browed Finches and White-browed Scrubwrens on the path.

A diversion to the beach yielded a Hooded Plover, together with three adult Red-capped Plovers with one chick. Surprisingly, the water was devoid of birds: not so much as a Silver Gull. A White-faced Heron on the creek seemed to have caught itself a small crab, and was dealing with the problem of its consumption. A raptor, most likely a Swamp Harrier, cruised overhead.
For a classic Victorian day of four seasons (admittedly, only a brief period of misty rain), our total birdcount of 49 species seemed quite satisfactory.
Text & Photos: Lee Denis
Left: King parrot Right: Welcome swallow on nest in bird hide

Bird List For Coolart 4th November 2024				
Pacific Black Duck	Eurasian Coot	Crimson Rosella	Red Wattlebird	Willie Wagtail
Chestnut Teal	Red-capped Plover	Eastern Rosella	Little Wattlebird	Grey Butcherbird
Hoary-headed Grebe	Black-fronted Dotterel	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Noisy Miner	Australian Magpie
Little Pied Cormorant	Hooded Plover	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Yellow-faced Hon-eyeater	Little Raven
Great Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Spinebill	Red-browed Finch
White-faced Heron	Spotted Dove	Sacred Kingfisher	Eastern Yellow Robin	Welcome Swallow
Australian White Ibis	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Superb Fairy-wren	Golden Whistler	Silvereye
Straw-necked Ibis	Galah	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Shrike-thrush	Common Blackbird
Swamp Harrier	Sulphur-crested Cock-atoo	White-browed Scrub-wren	Magpie-Lark	Common Myna
Purple Swamphen	Australian King-Parrot	Brown Thornbill	Grey Fantail	

The Buxton Gum

I like to visit garden plants in their place of origin, and while at the SEANA camp at Marysville took the opportunity to visit the home of the Buxton Gum at Buxton.
The Buxton Gum (Eucalyptus crenulata) is a small (to 12m) compact and pretty gum with striking blue green foliage and fruit. The leaves are heart shaped, stalkless and with crenulate (notched edge) wavy margins. It is one of the few gums that retain their juvenile-looking foliage into maturity. The trunk is rough barked, with smooth bark on the upper trunk and branches.
They are only found naturally at 2 sites, at Yering 64k away on the other side of the Great Dividing Range, and at Buxton, both on damp sites. Between the 2 sites they only occupy 10 hectares, with fewer than 600 plants altogether, and are classified as Endangered. The species was only discovered in 1938, and is not closely related to any other Eucalypts. The Buxton site was burnt in the 2009 fires, and it was feared that the trees would not survive. The intense fire burnt topsoil, exposing the multi-stemmed structure of the trees and large underground lignotubers, from which they re-sprouted. Some of the trees at the reserve are believed to be hundreds of years old. Some of the seedlings that came up after the fires are hybrids with the Swamp Gum (Eucalyptus ovata), but this isn't believed to be a threat to their survival at present.
It is fortunate that they are a popular garden plant, so they will survive in cultivation at least.
Text & Photos: Judy Smart
Below: Buxton Gum in cultivation in Marysville
Below right: Buxton Gums at Buxton Silver Gum NCR

Button-grass Nature Walk, Bunyip State Park
November 16, 2024

Two car loads of us met our Belgrave member, Craig Woods, at Button-grass Walk on a rather hot day. There is little shade on the walk, so we scooted around the track before it got any hotter.

It was our first visit back to Button-grass Walk since the bushfires there in March 2019. That section of Bunyip State Park stayed closed for another 3 years while tracks and roads were rebuilt. The forest has regenerated and recovered quite well after five years, and we were able to find most of the plants mentioned in the very informative Friends of Bunyip State Park track notes.

There were plenty of peas in flower, including Dillwynia sericea, Viminaria juncea (Golden Spray), Sphaerolobium viminium (Leafless Globe-pea) and Pultenaea sp, probably hispidula. The rare Swamp Bush-pea (Pultenaea weindorferi), which we had hoped to see had finished flowering.

We were intrigued by the tall Bushy Clubmoss (Lycopodium deuterodensum), which is still recovering from the fires. It is a descendant of a giant tree form of clubmoss which grew 300 million years ago.

There are 4 species of Hakea along the way, and we spent a bit of time comparing seed pods and the relative spikiness of the 'needle leaves', to identify the different species. The thickets of Melaleuca squarrosa were in beautiful lemon coloured flower. We came across another Potato orchid (Gastrodia sesamoides), a month after seeing some at Baluk Willam, and again with a strong cinnamon fragrance. The Button-grass (Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus) area is towards the end of the walk, in the Wet Heathland. This sedge (not a grass), is only found in southern Victoria in a few scattered locations from far west to far east Victoria, and the Grampians, always in wet heathland near watercourses. It is relatively common in Tasmania, in western and central areas, at varying altitudes.

Another striking plant we saw was Olearia asterotricha ssp lobata, with blue flowers and unusual cut foliage. This plant also has a restricted range, only found in Gembrook, Tonimbuk and Portland. It was collected at Bunyip by von Mueller.

We moved to Mortimer Picnic Ground for lunch in the shade, and walked along part of the nature trail there, admiring the tree ferns.

Text & most photos: Judy Smart

Top Pultenaea sp Lower left: Button-grass

Lower right: Olearia asterotricha ssp lobata (Lee Denis)

Avian Influenza H5N1

What is the Avian Influenza H5N1 strain?

High pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) is a highly infectious disease that can cause severe illness and death in poultry.

A new strain of HPAI, H5N1, is also causing disease in wild birds, mammals and in rare cases people in parts of the world.

HPAI strain H5N1 has not been detected in animals in Australia to date.

HPAI H5N1

Since 2021, the subtype HPAI H5N1 (clade 2.3.4.4.b) has spread rapidly across the world and infected a wide range of animals, including hundreds of species of wild birds and, more than 50 species of mammals. This strain differs from previous avian influenza strains, as it not only causes mass mortality in poultry but also of wild birds and some mammals. Australia is the only large continental land mass that is currently free from this strain.

Due to the global H5N1 situation, there is an increased risk of HPAI H5N1 arriving in Australia. As such, there is increased risk of outbreaks in local wild birds and other native wildlife as well as farmed and backyard poultry.

If you find sick or dead wild birds or other wildlife:

- **AVOID** contact with sick or dead wild birds and other wildlife, and their environment. Do not touch or collect sick or dead wild birds and other wildlife.
- **RECORD** what you see, the location the animal was found, and take photos or video. Do not touch the animal.
- **REPORT any mass mortality events in wildlife to DEECA by calling 136 186.** While H5N1 is not in Australia, reporting will be key to early detection. Please report:
  - Individual dead seabirds, waterbirds and shorebirds
  - Groups (five or more) of dead wild birds of any other species
  - Groups (five or more) of any bird species or other wildlife displaying the above signs.

Contact Us

Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc
CAV: A0010510T

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip on the following Saturday. Visitors always welcome.
We also go birding on the first Monday of the month.
Further information and current Program of Activities can be found at our website:
www.peninsulafieldnaturalists.org.au

We are also on Face book: **Peninsula Field Nats**

Email: penfieldnats@gmail.com

Annual subs due July

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